

The BYE-POST

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ed. Colin Stuart

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Spring is definitely here! So far we have been blessed recently with more than usually fine – even warm – weather, so we have been able to maintain good attendances at nearly all our meetings – which is just as well, because only if a majority of our active membership continue their support will the Club remain viable. Inevitably, because of the advancing years of most of us, we have to be aware of what you might call ‘natural shrinkage’.

We were off to an early (*or do I mean late?*) start to 2017 when we substituted a New Year Meeting for the more normal Christmas celebration (owing to a clash of fixtures). Somehow mince pies don’t taste quite the same in mid-January! There was a good, convivial turn-out nonetheless, and our thanks go as usual especially to Roy and to Anatolis, who contributed a welcome dash of European novelty.

As was said in the December Bye-Post, new and unfamiliar speakers have proved difficult to attract this year, which has thrown us back more than we would like upon our own members and near-neighbours to fill our bi-monthly programme. We are hampered to some degree by our difficulties in offering an exchange of speakers. Nevertheless, thanks especially to Rod, we filled our calendar. (Might the answer to this dilemma be occasionally to loosen the format of our meetings, which conventionally and slightly monotonously consist of a formal one-man ‘lecture’, reminiscent of our days at school – OK if there were a steady stream of good, interesting, available speakers. Any ideas?)

The second half of our 2016-17 programme kicked off with our modest Party, where the consumption of sweets, pies and sherry were accompanied by (silent) background showings by Rod Crump and your Chairman. Meanwhile the annual Quiz set by those two gentlemen proved as stimulating as ever. (I cannot quite remember who the actual winner was – was there one?). The meeting clashed with an auction at the Epping Forest Club, so our own attendance of 14 was a credit to us.

At the end of January Dick Salmon showed us his extremely comprehensive collection of New Zealand, from the early Chaloners, through George V and the Health stamps, up until George VI. In his three-part talk, Dick spoke crisply, interestingly and briefly, for which he is much to be applauded.

On Feb. 11th we tried a 'Bring and Buy'. This is sometimes a tricky fixture, because our fewness in numbers means it is hard to cover everybody's interests. And not all of us are adept at 'marketing'. Business was brisk, nevertheless. A more normal meeting on Feb. 27th was conducted by Graham Cole, who showed some of his speciality under the title of '100 Years of Malaya', the hundred years in question extending right up to the 1950s. (His presentation was of the British Straits Settlements rather than Malaya as a whole)

On March 11th a mishap occurred with the programme, when a booked speaker chose to speak elsewhere. However, our own Mr Reliable, alias Stuart Henderson, stepped into the breach at a day's notice and selected from his bewilderingly varied assembly of material, this time: postcards of old Ilford, local WW1 'Cinderella' material (including the once-notorious Vicar of Stiffkey, Norfolk), the Spanish-American War at sea in 1898, Canada in WW1 and the Royal Tour there, and finally the top-secret Swann Island in the Caribbean. Whew!

Most recently, on March 27th your chairman filled the evening with some material representing his recent change of focus, from Scandinavia to the Far East. He presented mainly stamps rather than covers but showed early Airmail covers from the Netherlands Indies, then much from Malaya, this time stamps of Borneo and the four native states that begin with 'P'; afterwards he showed China, including Hong Kong, foreign post offices, on to both old Imperial China and modern, beautiful stamps of the People's Republic in e.g. the 1980s (omitting Taiwan).

There remain this week's Fair at Our Lady of Lourdes Church on April 8th and our Auction on May 22nd, plus finally a visit from Keith Lillywhite of Epping Forest, who can be relied on for some very off-beat material. (We may need to supplement his half of our meeting with some contributions from our own members – if you have any small items you would like to show us, do please bring them along).

Our 2017 A.G.M. is scheduled for May 13th at the usual place. No agenda exists so far, but I sense that the future of our Club perhaps hangs in the balance, if not immediately, then in the two or three years to come. If members have anything they would like to recommend for discussion and to ensure our survival, please speak out. How has the Packet been faring?

Finally, a word or two about the loss of individual club members. Sadly we heard from New Zealand only days ago of the demise of our long-serving Secretary David Pashby, who lost his patient battle with ill health. I personally have been missing him. Another veteran member, Ron Brennand, has been forced to give up collecting, and Tony Bower died in November. On the positive side, however, Tony Aked has recovered from his recent set-back, and better still, Secretary Richard Wood has bounced back, full of life after his recent run-in with health problems.